

HOW TO... Use Office clip art

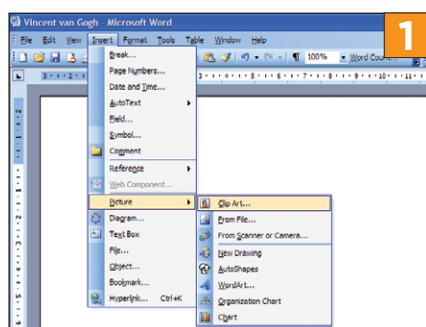
Most documents benefit from the right image selection. You may not think clip art is suitable, but here Rod Lawton explains how to use Office's supply to good effect

Clip art doesn't have a very good reputation. We expect it to be cheesy, dated and inappropriate for elegant, professional-looking documents. That's a conclusion anyone might have come to a few years back, when the only clip art you could add to your documents came from the images installed with Office. Chances are you probably haven't bothered looking since.

But things have changed. While those cheesy clips are still there, there are now many more not-so-cheesy clip art images available. And if you don't like a clip art image, you can alter it. Downloaded vector art can be edited directly in Office, which has surprisingly sophisticated drawing tools. These tools are buried on the Drawing toolbar and nested so deep in pop-up palettes and dialogs that you may not have stumbled upon them, but here we show these tools in action.

In this walkthrough, we explain how to find the right clip art, modify it and incorporate it into a Word 2003 document.

1 To add clip art to a Word document, go to the Insert menu and select Picture, Clip Art. This opens the Clip Art pane. If the Task pane is already open, just choose Clip Art from the Task pane menu. This clip art comes in four types: Clip art, Photographs, Movies and Sounds. Movies and Sounds are useful in PowerPoint Presentations, but not for our purposes.

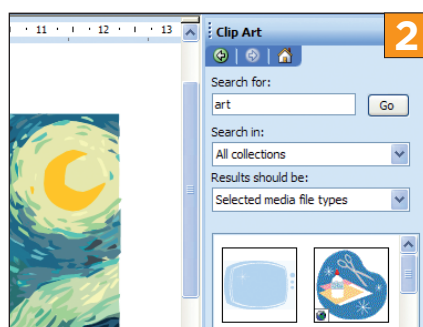


Photographs is self-explanatory. Clip art consists of scalable vector artwork, but may also include GIF files.

2 The Clip Art pane has a search field at the top, and in this instance, we're concocting a poster advertising a forthcoming exhibition of impressionist paintings, so we type in 'art'. The search results are shown below as thumbnails. There is a globe icon in the bottom right-hand corner of each thumbnail. This indicates that the clip is online, and it soon becomes apparent that this is where Office finds the bulk of the clip art you're searching for.

To add a clip to the document, just drag it across or use the pop-up menu. You can use the options below the search box to specify where the search takes place (online, offline or both) and what type of media file you're looking for. Here, we want only clip art – in other words, vector artwork rather than bitmaps.

3 At the bottom of the Clip Art pane are three options: Organize clips, Clip Art on Office Online, and Tips for finding clips. The last is a help page so we'll ignore that, but the first two are interesting as they relate to Office's Clip Organizer application. This is a tool for finding and organising clip art that's been around for a while and works in parallel with the Clip Art pane's search tools. Click on the Clip Art on Office Online link. This takes you to a

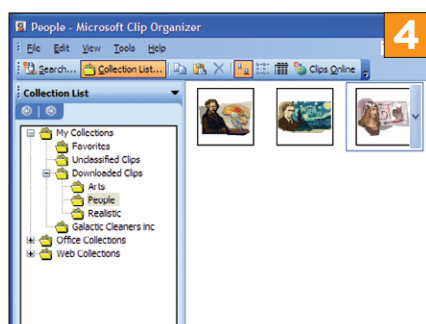
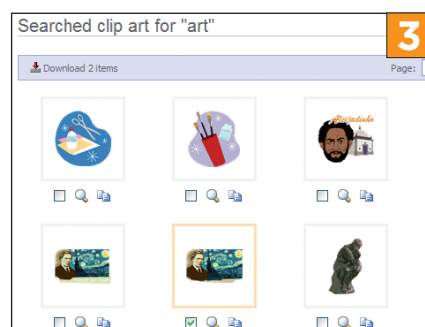


webpage where you can search for clips and tick the boxes next to those you want to download.

4 Once the required clips have been selected, the Download link transfers them as a single file to your computer, where they're added automatically to the Clip Organizer. The Clip Organizer is a handy tool for organising the clips on your hard disk using Collections and Keywords. You can also add files manually.

Clip Organizer is a neat idea, but it feels like a throwback to Office's older, pre-internet days. The Clip Art pane's search tools are quicker and offer direct access to the most recent content. Clip Organizer also has a bug that prevents you copying vector files from your documents back to the Organizer. Once you've finished modifying a graphic, it's natural to want to save it to the Clip Organizer for future use. However, if you do this the Clip Organizer only saves a low-res bitmap version. This is all the more bizarre given that you can copy artwork from the Clip Art pane into the Clip Organizer. We mention this so you don't get any nasty surprises when you try to do it. If you visit <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/282556>, you will see that Microsoft is aware of this issue, but as we went to press it had yet to supply a fix.

5 Clip art is inserted into your documents as 'pictures'. These can be edited for brightness and contrast adjustments, but that's



about it. At this stage, Word doesn't really differentiate between photos and vector art, treating both as discrete objects that can either be embedded on their own line in the document, or with the text flowing around them. To do this, you will need to change the picture's Text Wrap properties. There's a button for this on the Picture toolbar, which should appear automatically when a picture is selected.

To take full advantage of Office's editing tools, we need to right-click on the inserted clip art image and choose Edit Picture from the shortcut menu.

6 The picture is then converted into editable vector artwork and is placed inside a drawing canvas area. This makes editing pictures easier. It separates the drawing from any surrounding text. It also allows you to move the whole canvas and its contents around as a single item, which you do by dragging on the edge of the canvas.

If you plan on making any changes that will increase the overall size of the image, which we do, you'll need to increase the canvas size first. To do this, just drag on the corner or edge handles. Here, we've added some space below and to the right of the artwork to give us a little extra space in which to work.

If you are working in PowerPoint or Excel, bear in mind that there is no drawing canvas. In these programs, artwork is edited directly on the slide or worksheet.

7 Clip art is made up of different vector shapes, and these are usually grouped (though not always) when the artwork is converted for editing. To ungroup the shapes, right-click on the artwork and choose Grouping, Ungroup from the shortcut menu.

Sometimes artwork arrives with more than one level of grouping. It may be necessary to ungroup smaller sections of the artwork before individual shapes can be edited.

DID YOU KNOW?

Word 2003 offers no way of saving pictures as files that you can use in other applications, but you can cut and paste pictures to Paint or other photo software and save from there.

We are using the right-click menus for many of these operations, but they can also be carried out using the main menu on the Drawing toolbar. We will be needing the other options on this toolbar soon. If it is not already visible, it can be displayed using View, Toolbars, Drawing.

8 Once the artwork is ungrouped, each shape can be edited individually. This doesn't always offer the potential you might want, though, because the artwork isn't necessarily converted into usefully organised shapes. While Office clip art is indeed editable, it's constructed in a way that can make editing quite difficult. The artwork is converted automatically, by machine, into simple regions of colour rather than being constructed in a logical way as recognisable, layered objects by a human artist.

In this walkthrough, however, we are not going to attempt any ambitious reworking of the main image. Instead, we simply want to extend the green panel at the base downwards. To do this, we select the shape, then right-click and choose Edit points from the shortcut menu.

9 Each of the points that define this shape can now be dragged to a new position (indicated in the screenshot by the red dotted line). This can be applied to any other vector shape, and it's here that Office demonstrates some of its hidden depths. We haven't needed to do it here, but you can also right-click on any point and change it to an Auto, Smooth, Straight or Corner point.

Word incorporates fully fledged bezier drawing tools like those in dedicated drawing programs, but many users aren't aware of this because they are buried so deep. Indeed, there's no reason why you shouldn't create comparatively simple artwork from scratch if

you have the artistic talent, because Word has just about everything you need.

10 Next, we add a text box underneath the image and overlapping the shape we've just extended. By default, text boxes are created with a white fill and a '1 point' outline. These need changing, and we'll deal with them shortly. First, though, we type in the event text and choose a suitable font. The font colour can be selected using the pop-up on the Drawing toolbar. We've picked a colour that echoes one of the colours used in the main illustration. This is a neat designer's trick for ensuring that the overall image retains a cohesive look.

11 We want to get rid of the outline for the text box and also change the fill colour. Both these jobs can also be done using pop-ups on the Drawing toolbar, and it's an opportunity to demonstrate another handy little trick. These pop-up palettes can be torn off the toolbar and floated on the screen so that they stay open all the time. The same can be done with other pop-up palettes on the Drawing toolbar, including the AutoShapes palettes and the Order palette. This is useful if you are making larger scale changes to pictures or you will be working with the drawing tools for long periods.

12 Finally, we have achieved the semi-transparent effect for the text box by right-clicking on it and choosing Format Text Box from the shortcut menu (you will need to make sure the box border is selected, and not the contents, before right-clicking). In the Colors and Lines tab, you will see a Transparency slider under the fill colour. We have set this to 50%.

You may be surprised to find that Word supports transparency in graphics, but it actually goes further than this. When you open the Fill Colour palette, you will see a Fill Effects button at the bottom. Select this, and the Fill Effects dialog will open at the Gradient tab. Here, you can create not only colour gradients but also transparency gradients. ■

